



Sociaal-Economische  
Raad Curaçao

# Highlights Migration Symposium

Migration and Socioeconomic Development  
Policy challenges and options

t.b.v. Presentation SER Curaçao  
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## Focus and points of departure

- *Relevance for the ACS countries*: migration issues as they occur in Aruba, Curaçao and Sint maarten (ACS).
- *Evidence based*: using the *lessons learned* and *best practices* locally, regional and worldwide.
- *Result driven*: results must be useful and relevant for policy makers, strengthen social consensus and take the debate to the next level.

## Introduction

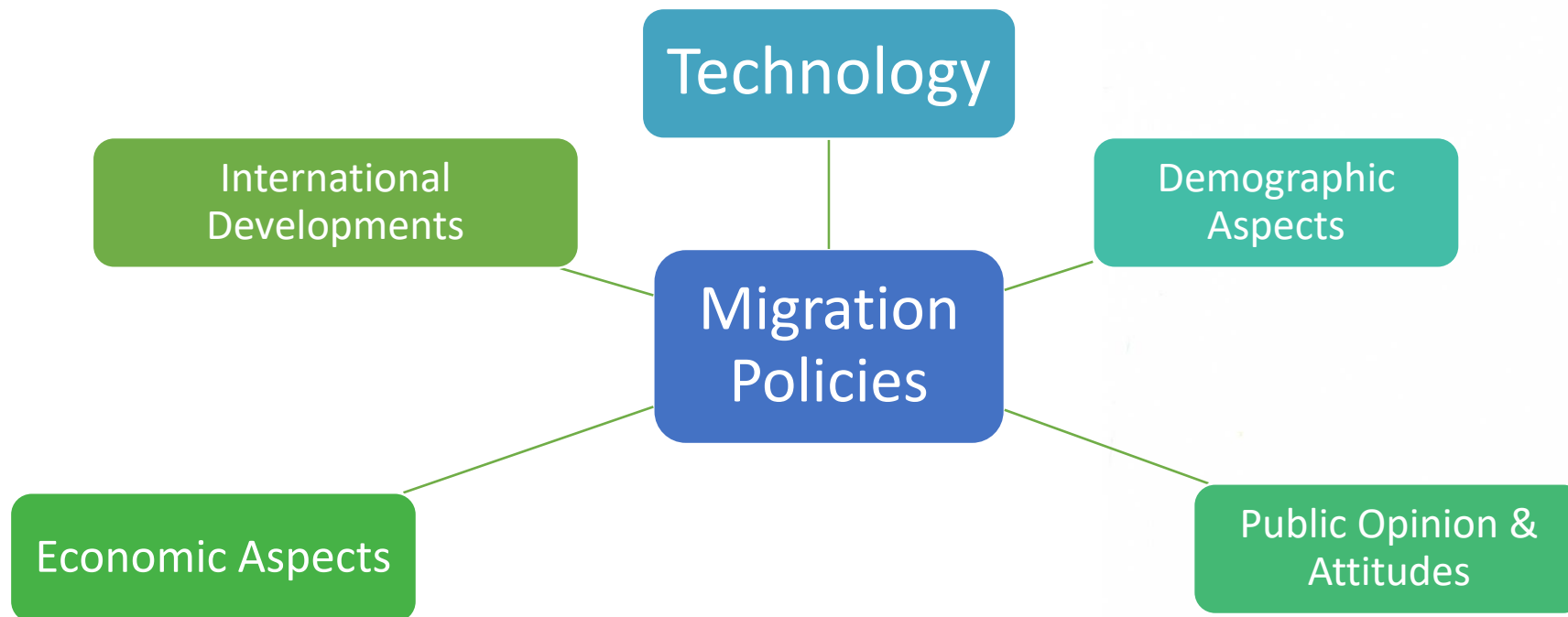
- The history of the ACS countries is a history of migration.
- Historically, migration is an important driver of the economy.
- The issue of migration issue includes socio-economic, cultural, historical, legal as well as political aspects.

# Definition of Migration policy

A government's statement of what it intends to do or not to do (including laws, regulations, decisions or orders) in regards to the selection, admission, settlement and deportation of foreign citizens residing in the country.

# Introduction

- Policy-making:



## Reasons to focus on (labour) migration (for each country to a greater or lesser degree)

1. Long term stagnation of the economy
2. Increasing elderly population and decreasing younger population (Aruba, Curaçao)
3. Social security system under pressure
4. Brain-drain
5. Mismatch labour market
6. Refugee crisis Venezuela / irregular migrants

## Leading questions

- What is the role of labour migration with regard to sustainable socio-economic development?
- Which are the opportunities and challenges of labour migration?
- How to optimise the benefits of migration and how to minimise the costs?

## Design and approach

- Presentations by a broad spectrum of stakeholders:
  - Prime ministers of the three countries
  - SER Curaçao, Aruba and Sint Maarten
  - Academics: University of Curaçao, University of Sint Maarten, University of Amsterdam
  - Independent Think Tanks: Think to Do Institute Curaçao, Migration Policy Institute Washington, Centre of Public Policies IESA Caracas
  - UN organisations: IOM, UNHCR, CMC
  - Migrants
  - Aruba Trade & Industry Association, Social Security Bank Aruba, Association of Companies Curaçao
  - NGOs: Human Rights Caribbean, Refugees International
  - Canadian Embassy Bogota



## Design and approach

- Panel discussions
- Q&A
- 5 parallel thematic Breakout sessions – day 2
- [www.ser.cw](http://www.ser.cw) for all the presentations and more information

## Participants

- Dignitaries
- Chairpersons / members SER ACS
- Members of Parliament Curaçao
- Government staff ACS
- Employers/Employees organisations
- Civil Society / NGOs / Refugee organisations
- International organisations
- Universities
- Advocacy

## Evaluation

- Symposium assessed well to excellent
- Unanimously:
  - Relevant and broad scope of topics, high quality presentations
  - Wide variety of speakers and experts
  - Balanced, informative for policy making, research, publications
  - Smooth organization
- Some:
  - Too many too short presentations, good discussions but too short, impact of 'mass scale migration' underexposed
- **MUST:** continue to build on the acquired knowledge towards policy making

## Opportunities and challenges of labor migration

High consensus among scholars and practitioners that labor migration, when *well-managed*, can bring significant benefits for: host countries, sending countries and migrants.

### Benefits:

- Addresses critical shortages of labor & specialization gaps – e.g. refinery, financial sector, high-tech sector, hospitality sector
- Pushes native labor force to specialize more: human capital development
- Boosts working-age population (benefits an aging population)
- Increases economic activity, entrepreneurship, technological progress
- Increases tax revenues and social contributions

However; challenges should not be underestimated and need to be addressed.

## Challenges:

- Labor market concentrations can lead to anxiety, insecurity and short-term disruptions
- competition in the labor market
- dislocation of native-born workers can involve substantial costs for them
- overburdening of the social system; especially when migration flows arrive unexpectedly and in high amount.

- Policy needs to focus on addressing the challenges in order to be able to reap the benefits of migration. E.g. ease the costs of short-term dislocations and distribute more widely the economic benefits.
- There are no easy solutions! Pro-active and strategic – contingency planning. Learn to manage migration
- Do not criminalize migration. Respect the migrants' human and labor rights

## Reasons for Selection Policies on migration

- Effective selection policies can:
  - Help meet labor or skills shortages
  - Provide an alternative to the informal economy
  - Foster economic growth

## Addressing the challenges, reaping the benefits ; Measures brought forward by various speakers

- Identify labor market gaps together with employers
- New trainings to fill labor market gaps
- Facilitate entry into the formal economy (including temporary residential visas and work permits for migrant workers); this also leads to lower crime rates
- Run media campaigns to change the narrative and practices
- Adapt local education system to respond to the labor market



## Irregular migrants and the informal sector

- The informal economy is omnipresent, you can't crackdown it, because there is a mutual benefit factor.
- Migrants are pushed into the informal economy when they do not meet the requirements to become a legal resident or a legal worker. A growing informal economy runs the risk of attracting more irregular migrants.
- Temporary residency and working permit enable migrants to participate in the formal economy.
- At least register newcomers to get insight in the numbers and to be able to manage the disruptive features of large influxes.

## Governments can opt for a few different approaches to select labor migrants

- Hands-off, employer-led approach
- More proactive, government-led approach, which can include:
  - Labor market test
  - Quotas
  - Shortage occupation list
  - Channels for certain categories of migrants
- Human-capital-led approach (point-based system, admission criteria)
- Hybrid selection system: employer-led and points-based system

## Ongoing challenges

- Creating a fast and responsive system to emerging labor and skills shortages
- Accurately assessing labor market needs
- Weighing employer needs against other political priorities
  - *Employer: “Oftentimes the interests of ministries of labor and ministries of immigration conflict, thereby effectively preventing entry of foreign workers into a country.”*
- Protecting the rights of migrant workers

## Ongoing challenges

- Selecting migrants with the ability to adapt to fast-changing labor markets
- Migration policies should include the promotion of migrant entrepreneurship, as self-employment constitutes an interesting route towards upward mobility and integration to the benefit of both newcomers and the society at large.

## Dynamic process

- Review constantly how well the selection system works
- Use evidence on integration outcomes to inform admission criteria

## Other policy-relevant takeaways

### Without migration there is no future (Social Security Bank Aruba - SVB Aruba)

1. The demographic and epidemiological transitions will have great impact on the cost of the Social Security system of Aruba.
2. The Social Security depends heavily on economic growth in order to attend its sustainability issue.
3. The population of 2015 does not have the potential to increase economic production in the future.
4. Migration is indispensable in seeking sustainability of the Social Security system of Aruba.

## Employers:

1. Adopt migration policies that are timely, flexible, predictable and transparent so that employers can effectively manage compliance.
2. Ensure employers are partners in identifying skills gaps and establishing frameworks for assessing foreign qualifications. Trusting employers to identify the most-qualified candidate.
3. Ensure that the local and short-term social costs of immigration do not detract from immigration **“as one of the primary sources of development”**.

## Canada

- Canada has developed an immigration system that is central to government policy planning on the future of the economy and social development.
  
- Future success will depend on:
  - ✓ Being attentive to economic drivers,
  - ✓ Maintaining social cohesion, and
  - ✓ Sustaining credibility and confidence.



# Regional cooperation

- IOM/UNHCR-led: Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform
  - >> Caribbean Sub-regional Refugee & Migrants Response Plan: Aruba, Curaçao, Guyana, T&T, Dom. Republic
- CMC = Caribbean Migration Consultations, forum to discuss migration and refugee protection topic to develop coordinated, rights-based approaches – Regional Plan of Action: September 2019 formalization of CMC.

## SDGs

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes for the first time the contribution of migration to sustainable development.
- 11 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contain targets and indicators that are relevant to migration or mobility. The Agenda's core principle is to "**leave no one behind**", including migrants.

## SDGs

- The SDGs' central reference to migration is made in target 10.7: to facilitate by 2030 orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.
- The Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration (signed by 164 countries in December 2018) is rooted in the 2030 Agenda.